

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
28 February 2006

**The United States Agency for International Development –USAID
Launches an Assistance Project to Build Private Sector Businesses in Swaziland**

*USAID has chosen TechnoServe as their implementing partner to operate
The Swaziland Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Program (SWEEP)*

*The goal of SWEEP is to drive economic growth and job creation in the Kingdom of Swaziland by
assisting competitive firms and improving the business environment*

MBABANE, SWAZILAND, 28 February 2008 – TechnoServe has opened a new Swaziland office and is launching its five-year Swaziland Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Program (SWEEP) today. The project is supported by the United States Embassy in Mbabane and made possible by the funding of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SWEEP beneficiaries are Swaziland-based small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) capable of creating expanded employment and income opportunities for the country's citizens.

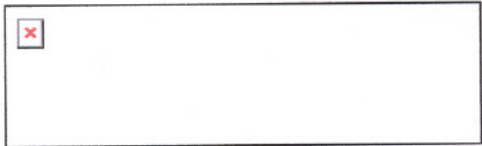
The launch event program at the Royal Swazi Spa will feature preliminary remarks by representatives from the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA), USAID, and TechnoServe. The official launch of SWEEP will begin with the arrival of His Majesty, King Mswati III. The ceremony will open with an introduction by His Excellency, the Minister of Enterprise and Employment Lutfo Dlamini. The Regional Administrator, the Honorable US Ambassador to Swaziland Lewis Lucke, and His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Swaziland will also speak. Following his keynote address, His Majesty, King Mswati III will unveil the SWEEP plaque, thereby officially launching the program.

“USAID is proud to have TechnoServe carry out our foreign policy goals of assisting the private sector to serve as the engine of growth in Swaziland and the region,” says Lawrence Johnson, USAID regional advisor. “We believe in the richness of the Swaziland physical environment and the abilities of its people to use an open and free market business environment to create successful products and services that can compete in the region and globally. With access to technology and technical support, we hope to see Swaziland firms gain greater recognition and revenues that lead to a wealthier and healthier society.”

“TechnoServe is very excited to launch SWEEP with USAID's support,” says TechnoServe/Swaziland Country Director Leslie Anne Johnston. “Building on TechnoServe's experience in other African countries, this comprehensive program will give entrepreneurs the support they need to create and grow rural businesses, thus helping to mitigate poverty in Swaziland.”

SWEEP's business advisors will support individual entrepreneurs and their businesses throughout each stage of their development -- from idea to expansion. SWEEP will work with Swaziland's financial institutions to help close the gaps between their respective products and SME clients. The program will also build sustainable local capacity -- such as local business service providers and associations -- to support entrepreneurs and SMEs and work to address enabling environment constraints to SME development.

“Swaziland is facing significant obstacles to growth, and SWEEP couldn't come at a more critical time,” Johnston says. “The country is currently feeling the pain of decreasing sugar prices, increasing unemployment, decreasing tax revenues, and investment being relocated to South Africa. Small and medium-sized enterprises offer an important vehicle for creating jobs and rural incomes in Swaziland -- particularly as the government focuses on diversifying the country's economy and creating new jobs.



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SWEEP will help foster an environment in which new businesses will thrive and help elevate communities out of poverty.”

SWEEP is being designed and implemented by TechnoServe, a non-profit business development organization focused on promoting economic growth in developing countries. It will be working with Abt Associates, Genesis Analytics and ECI*Africa*. TechnoServe’s new office in Mbabane will include eight local hires, including five business experts who will assist entrepreneurs throughout the country.

The launch of SWEEP will convene approximately 400 guests including existing and emerging Swazi entrepreneurs as well as representatives from government, industry associations, banks and other financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and donor agencies. The program will include remarks by the following speakers: John Creamer of SIPA; Lawrence Johnson of USAID/RCSA; Simon Winter, TechnoServe’s Africa Regional Director and Vice President; Timo Smit, TechnoServe/South Africa Country Director; Leslie Anne Johnston, TechnoServe/Swaziland Country Director; Rafael Jabba of USAID/DCA; and Lewis Lucke, Ambassador of the United States of America.

TechnoServe will host a day-long workshop on entrepreneurship at the same venue on March 1. A panel of Swaziland’s leading entrepreneurs will discuss the key success factors necessary to starting and growing a profitable and sustainable business. The workshop will also feature information about the financing landscape in Swaziland, a module on developing a business plan, advice on accessing finance, a presentation about resources for microentrepreneurs, and information about local BDS (business development services) providers.

About USAID: USAID is the primary means of delivering official United States assistance worldwide. Its offices and staff provide Humanitarian, Economic Development, Democracy and Governance assistance as well as Education and Health services across the globe. USAID traces its history to the formal reconstruction offered by the Marshall Plan for Europe following the Second World War. USAID partners and beneficiary countries have been an important part of building vigorous and successful countries that range from Asia to the new members of the European Union and newly independent states. The successful beneficiary countries have grown their economies, improved their environments, created jobs and thus reduced poverty, and increased life quality and human achievement. USAID carries out its work through private firms, non-profit organizations, international assistance entities and by engaging their own USAID staff. USAID works under the guidance and coordination of the broader United States foreign policy diplomatic goals of building a safer, healthier and economically vital global community of nations.

About TechnoServe: TechnoServe helps entrepreneurial men and women in poor rural areas of the developing world to build businesses that create income, opportunity and economic growth for their families, their communities and their countries. Since its founding in 1968, it has helped to create or improve more than 1,200 businesses, benefiting millions of people in 24 countries. TechnoServe was recognized as one of the world’s “Outstanding Social Entrepreneurs” by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. For more information, contact: Leslie Johnston, Country Director, TechnoServe/Swaziland, Tel: +268 635 78 23; Email: leslianne.johnston@gmail.com.